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ABSTRACT

The German department of the University of California at Berkeley initiated this year a new series of programs for beginning and intermediate students, partially in response to the abolition of the foreign language requirement. This report describes the four options called: (1) the Basic Course, (2) the Intensive Course, (3) the Course Emphasizing Reading, and (4) Individualized Instruction. The paper concludes with a description of contact sessions available to students with their professors and a review of current enrollment trends in the new system at the university. (RL)

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THE STUDENT HAS A CHOICE

Four Instructional Modes for College Students of German

by

Klaus A. Mueller

The abolition of the foreign language requirement, among other recent dramatic changes in university and college curricula, presents us with enormous challenges which must be met in good part with innovative and stimulating course offerings if we are to continue in the educational scene as a vital subject area. To meet this challenge, the German department of the University of California at Berkeley initiated this year a new series of programs for beginning and intermediate students. For the first time a German student has a choice of four possible approaches to the learning of German--the Basic Course, the Intensive Course, the Course Emphasizing Reading, and Individualized Instruction. Obviously the most innovative of these alternatives is the Individualized Instruction program, and it is this program which in consequence will command my attention.

However, I wish first to briefly describe the other options:

1. The Basic Course: The purpose of this course sequence is to develop the basic language skills of speaking, reading, and writing. For the first three quarters the course incorporates varied approaches to attain its goals. Spoken forms are consistently introduced before written forms, although the interval between listening-speaking and

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reading-writing activities is short. Grammatical explanations and summaries are systematically provided in the text after introduction and drill in class. Practice in listening and speaking is provided in the class through dialogues, reports and oral exercises, and in the language laboratory and on tapes issued to students for individual practice. Structural drills in class are programmed so that students will rarely make errors. Further reinforcement is provided by a workbook.

German is used almost exclusively in class. Cultural materials are introduced early, but gradually. The course has five class-hours per week. Work in the language laboratory or with individual tape recorders is part of the students' homework. Once a week students discuss subjects of special interest based on individually selected reading or references, or based on special presentations by instructors.

The fourth quarter provides a grammar review and readings in German literature. Modern authors, such as Rinser, Bender, Gaiser, Brecht, Kafka, Kaschnitz, Böll, and Britting are included. The textbook links the reading selections with writing, audio-lingual exercises, literary analysis, and grammar reviews. The grammar review section is keyed to the readings, and the exercises are based on the sentences from the literary selections. In addition to reading and discussion in class, practice is provided through an integrated tape program in the language laboratory.

2. The Intensive Course: The intensive beginning and intermediate courses have the same content and purpose as the Basic Course described above,

with the exception that the four quarters of work are condensed into two quarters. (Thus, the student completes four quarters' work in two quarters and has ten class-hours per week instead of five.)

3. Course Emphasizing Reading: There are a number of students each year who take German to fulfill a need for a specific major, often in the sciences. Most of these students require special training in reading and translation. As a consequence, the course is designed to do exactly that. Oral work and cultural material are included, but receive much less emphasis than in the other three programs. The translation of German texts and the discussion of structures in English are major activities in the classroom. As in the Basic Course, there are five class-hours per week in addition to outside preparation.

4. Individualized Instruction: The Individualized Instruction Program is designed to make it possible for each student to learn German at the rate he desires. It enables instructors to accommodate students' learning pace, as well as to provide students with individualized instruction as his needs and interests dictate.

Student-Instructor contact differs markedly from the previously described courses with respect to scheduled class sessions and homework assignments. Some contacts with teachers are drill sessions, others, individual appointments, and still others are testing sessions. Through these contacts the students determine their learning rate and enable instructors to teach, counsel, and test as necessary.

The program so designed provides the maximum desirable contact with the

instructor on an individualized basis. Students' requests for help in specific areas can be readily accommodated.

The Individualized Instruction Program consists of the following basic parts:

A. Achievement Units. The course materials, which are the same as those used in the Basic Course, are divided into Achievement Units. They consist of a certain number of lessons from the basic text, the workbook, and the recorded materials. The content of each unit is outlined in the Learning Plan.

B. Learning Plans. Each Learning Plan lists the order and sequence, and describes the nature of the various course components in order to provide the student with a guide for making efficient progress. The Learning Plan is advisory and need not be strictly followed.

C. Practice Tests. After the student has completed the work of an Achievement Unit, he proceeds to complete the Practice Test for this unit. These tests are written and oral and enable the student to check and test himself on how well he has mastered the material of each unit. He may show the completed Practice Tests to his instructor, but need not do so. When he thinks he is ready, or when he has been advised by his instructor that he is ready, he takes the appropriate Achievement Unit Test.

D. Achievement Unit Tests. The Achievement Unit Tests are written and oral examinations covering the material of each unit. They

are administered at a time determined by the student. If he passes the test, he will be assigned one Unit Credit and a grade.

E. Grading. Students receive one grade at the end of each quarter. The grade is the average of the grades of all completed units. The grade and the number of units completed are recorded on his course report.

Students meet with instructors in three distinct types of contact sessions:

1. Class hours
2. Consultation hours
3. Office hours

Each instructor in the course conducts two of each of these sessions per week. In the class sessions a number of students practice a variety of drills, dialogues are introduced and acted out, and reading selections are discussed. In the consultation hours a smaller number of students are helped and given guidance and practice involving specific structural or phonemic items which have caused problems. During the office hours the student receives individual instruction.

Students attend these three types of sessions as frequently as they wish or as they are advised. The frequency of attendance and the choice of attending the type of contact offered depends on the pace the student has set for himself, his needs for help, and the objectives he has in mind.

Instructors are assigned for every level needed. The rate at which a student in the course completes units determines in part the number of instructors with whom he works. In consequence, the assignment of each instructor's work with the course materials is determined by the size of student groups at every level and the rate of student progress.

Some students finish only 1 unit in a quarter. Some complete 12-15 units. Most complete 6-8 units. (The Basic and Reading Emphasis courses yield 5 units per quarter, the Intensive course, 10.)

In conclusion it should be noted first that students avail themselves of all four course options, and second that Individualized Instruction is steadily becoming more popular. The statistics presented below illustrate the extent to which the four options were chosen by our students during the 1970-71 academic year.

% Enrollment	FALL QUARTER	WINTER QUARTER	SPRING QUARTER
Basic Course	76%	62%	62%
Intensive Course	3%	3%	0%*
Reading Course	15%	12%	10%
Individualized Instruction	6%	23%	28%

*course not offered in this quarter.